### CHAPTER ONE

# **Hunting and Hunter Education**

# Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- State the purpose of hunter education and who in Montana is required to take it.
- Identify the agency responsible for offering hunter education and managing wildlife in Montana.
- List three reasons why people hunt.
- List and describe the five stages of hunter development.

You will learn a great deal about hunting, firearms and wildlife in this class. You will learn that hunting involves more than shooting and killing an animal. You will also learn that safe and responsible hunting involves more than just following a few rules.

The learning objectives are highlighted at the beginning of each chap-

The learning objectives are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter. These are the points you need to know to become a responsible hunter and to pass the written test.

Many hunters hunt their whole lives and never stop learning. In fact, you will probably learn something new every time you hunt. This class is only an introduction. It's your responsibility to get any additional information from other sources.

To learn more about hunting, outdoor skills, and other important subjects talk to your Hunter Education Instructor, your parents, or a mentor (someone you look up to and respect). You can also ask your local game warden or wildlife biologist (a person who studies wild animals). One of the best ways to learn about hunting is to spend time with an experienced hunter you know and respect. Also, check out Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' website fwp.mt.gov for more information about hunting.

# What is the purpose of Hunter Education?

Hunter education strives to instill responsibility, improve skills and knowledge, and encourage the involvement of beginner and veteran hunters. Responsible, ethical behavior and personal involvement are both essential to the survival of hunting.

# \* Responsibility

A knowledgeable and skillful student of hunting will never be a true hunter unless he or she also behaves responsibly. Responsible behavior includes courtesy, respect of others and of wildlife, and involvement. Responsible hunters do not poach or act carelessly. Responsible hunters obey hunting laws, hunt fairly, practice safety rules, and wait for a clean kill before shooting. How you behave and how other people see you will determine hunting's future.

# **♦ Safety Skills**

Hunting-related safety skills are gained through hands-on training and practice. It is most valuable to learn these skills from an experienced hunter.



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Knowledge is learning and understanding the basics of safe gun handling and hunting. Before being trained in the skill of firearm shooting, you should know how the firearm operates and how to handle it safely.

#### **Involvement**

Part of the process of becoming a true, responsible sportsman is becoming involved in efforts to make hunting a respected sport. That includes teaching others, working with landowners, and cooperating with game wardens. It also includes joining conservation organizations, which will help preserve habitat and promote wildlife management.



# Why is Hunter Education important?

### **Hunting safely**

What we call Hunter Education used to be called Hunter Safety. In 1949, New York became the first state to require young hunters to take a hunter safety course. Many hunters didn't know how to handle firearms safely, and hunting accidents occurred at an alarming rate. To make hunting safer, experienced hunters organized classes to teach others basic safety techniques. It worked. There are now fewer hunting accidents.

Montana began offering voluntary Hunter Education classes in the late 1940s, and in 1957 classes became mandatory for all hunters under the age of 18. Today anyone born after January 1, 1985, must complete hunter education before they can buy a hunting license in Montana.

Hunting, like the public view of it, has changed over the years. As a result, Hunter Education has had to change, too. Safety is still a big part of Hunter Education, but today's classes also teach responsibility and ethics.

# Hunter Education is important because it helps to:

- Prevent hunting and shooting accidents.
- Improve hunter behavior to maintain public acceptance of hunting.
- Finsure the future of hunting in Montana by educating the next generation of hunters.

The responsible and respectful hunter understands and respects the views of nonhunters. Many people have never hunted and don't understand what it's all about. Others simply disagree with hunting and killing animals. But in some instances, people who have nothing against hunting may have seen hunters doing things they don't like. For instance, wearing blood stained clothing in public. Irresponsible and disrespectful behavior of a few hunters can affect the public's attitude toward all hunters. Those who are against hunting,



for whatever reason, may close their land, vote for laws that limit hunting opportunities, or try to ban hunting altogether.

To preserve hunting in Montana we all need to behave responsibly—to the land, wildlife, the laws, and other people. Hunter Education provides you the tools and knowledge to do just that.

# Who is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife in Montana?

In Montana, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is responsible for administering Hunter Education courses and managing wildlife. Most volunteer instructors are hunters who are dedicating their time to make sure you get a good start as a hunter.

Montana Hunter Education classes are free to participants. Even though the instructors are volunteers, Hunter Education still costs money because manuals and other class materials are not free. Much of the money for wildlife management and Hunter Education comes from a tax placed on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. (See page 107 for more information.)

# Why you hunt

# Is hunting necessary?

For tens of thousands of years humans hunted to survive. In many cases, we got our food, shelter, clothing, and tools from the animals we killed. For our ancestors, a successful hunt meant the difference between life and death. Today we get our food from grocery stores, and we no longer need to hunt to provide ourselves with shelter, clothing, or tools. However, some people still hunt primarily for food.

Just because we no longer *need* to hunt for survival doesn't mean that hunting is no longer necessary or desirable. We could also survive without swimming or riding bikes, without playing basketball, or spending time with friends.

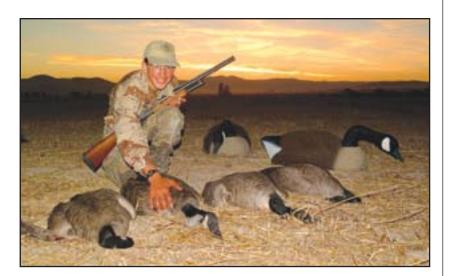
There are many personal reasons why we hunt and why we value hunting. Hunting allows us to:

- Gather our own food.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- 🕏 Participate in family and community traditions.
- Learn about animals and plants.
- Be a part of nature and the natural world.
- 🦸 Develop skills and become self-reliant.
- Fixercise, relax, and get away from "the daily grind."
- ₹ Explore wild places and feel the excitement of the chase.
- Finjoy the taste of wild game meat.



Hunting also generates benefits:

- **Wildlife Management**—FWP depends on hunting to help manage wildlife populations.
- **Funding for Wildlife**—Hunting licenses and taxes on hunting equipment contribute about \$800 million to the national economy annually. These funds provide an average of about \$2 million every day for wildlife management as well as hunter education.
- Jobs and Economic Activity—Hunting supports more than 700,000 jobs in the U.S. alone. People spend over \$22 billion a year to go hunting. The average Montana hunter spends about \$1,500 each year on hunting trips, equipment, and other hunting related goods or services. In Montana, about 190,000 people hunt (about 1 in every 5 people hunt).
- ❖ Community Support and Stability—Many communities in Montana have a long tradition of hunting. The tradition of preparing for the hunt is a way of reestablishing ties that help to bring together and sustain a community.



"I don't know—I just like it."
Hunters enjoy hunting. They have some very deep feelings about hunting, but often find it difficult to express those feelings in ways others understand.

"I hunt to relax and to get away from it all." Some people say the worst day hunting is better than the best day at work or school. Hunting takes your mind off your worries and gives you time to relax.

"I hunt to learn about nature." In nature, every living thing is connected to others. When you hunt, you will see, hear, smell, and feel things you have never experienced before.

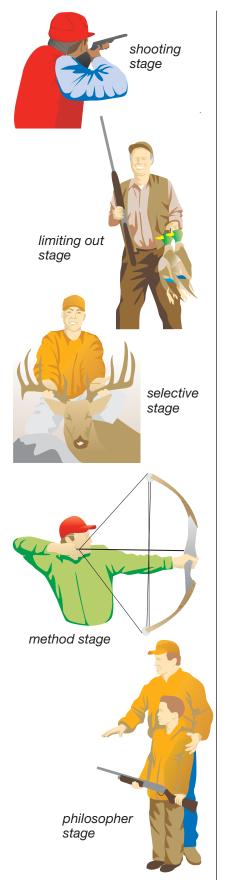
"I hunt because I like the adventure and challenge." Hunting challenges your skills in the woods and tests your hardiness. Can you hike up to the area where the game crosses? Do you know how to read animal sign? Would you know what to do if you got lost?

"I hunt because it gives me a sense of accomplishment." Becoming a good hunter takes skill. You must know how to read animal sign and walk silently in the woods. You must learn to pursue, harvest, field dress, and cook game meat. You must learn about the animals you hunt, their behavior and habitats. Developing these skills gives you a sense of accomplishment.

"I hunt because it keeps me healthy." Hunters must stay in shape. Keeping up with a bird dog, hiking hills, or setting decoys keeps you active and in good physical shape.

"I hunt to interact with nature."
Calling game is a thrill. When a turkey gobbles in response to your call or a bull elk challenges your bugle, it is sure to send a shiver down your spine. Interacting with wild animals is a wonderful and rewarding experience.

"I hunt with man's best friend."
Owning and training a hunting dog will enrich your life. A good hunting dog is more than a dog—it's a hunting partner. Watching a dog work is an exciting reason to hunt.



# Five stages of the hunter

Many hunters go through five stages of hunting. These are marked by changes in attitudes and feelings about hunting. Many of the things they enjoy about hunting are different in each stage.

# Stage one: The shooting stage

Many beginning hunters are excited to begin hunting. Often they want, more than anything, to be able to shoot an animal to test their skills. They often judge success by the amount of shooting they do. If you are in this stage, your first concern needs to be safety.

# Stage two: The limiting out stage

With practice it doesn't take long to get good at shooting. An experienced hunter can often take as many animals as the law allows. This is called "limiting out." They judge success by how many animals they bring home. Hunters in this stage need to remember the rules of safe gun handling, but they also need to follow carefully hunting laws and regulations.

# Stage three: The selective stage

Selective hunters don't try to hunt for a lot of different animals. Usually, they're after one particular animal. This might be a white-tailed deer with a particular set of antlers or a mountain goat that's difficult to get to. Selective hunters challenge themselves by going after animals that are secretive or otherwise difficult to hunt. These hunters judge success by their ability to master a challenge.

# Stage four: The method stage

Some hunters choose a particular method to hunt, such as bow hunting. These methods require hunters to get very close to an animal before they can take a shot. This makes hunting more difficult and more challenging. These hunters judge success by their ability to learn and master a particular method.

# Stage five: The philosopher stage

As many hunters mature and gain experience, they look back on a lifetime of hunting and find that what they enjoyed the most is not one single thing. Instead, it's a combination of many things. Hunters in this stage might enjoy simply getting out, taking an animal is not nearly as important. They enjoy passing on their knowledge to new hunters. These hunters judge success by how they feel about the entire hunting experience.

# **Chapter One Quiz**

|     | ne purpose of Hunter Education is to neip nunters become safe, responsible, and knowledgeable. (Mark the correct answer.) |
|-----|---|
|     | true  |
|     | false   |
| Н   | unter Education is important because it: (Mark the correct answer(s).)  |
|     | teaches hunters how to be safe.   |
|     | teaches hunters how to be responsible.  |
|     | takes a lot of time to complete.  |
|     | unter education in Montana is supported by: (Mark the correct answer(s).) volunteers who teach classes.                   |
|     | Wontana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, which develops class materials.   |
|     | a tax that provides funding to buy class materials.   |
|     | all of the above.   |
|     |   |
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| VV  | hy do you want to hunt? Give your personal reasons.   |
|     |   |
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| -   |   |
|     |   |
| G   | ive three reasons why it is important to behave responsibly around nonhunters.  |
|     |   |
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|     |   |
|     |   |